

Mark Getelman

Champion Specialist

The sports healer

By Chris Officer
Staff Writer

Medical specialists like Dr. Mark Getelman are changing the narrative of what were once considered catastrophic injuries for an athlete from near career-enders to merely a minor setback.

Getelman is an orthopedic trauma, adult reconstructive and sports medicine surgeon specializing in shoulder and knee procedures. Practicing out of Southern California Orthopedic Institute's Thousand Oaks and Van Nuys' offices, Getelman explained his work as pretty straightforward: to get an injured patient healed and back to what they love doing.

"That's our goal," Getelman said. "To get athletes back as fast as possible and get them back to doing what they enjoy."

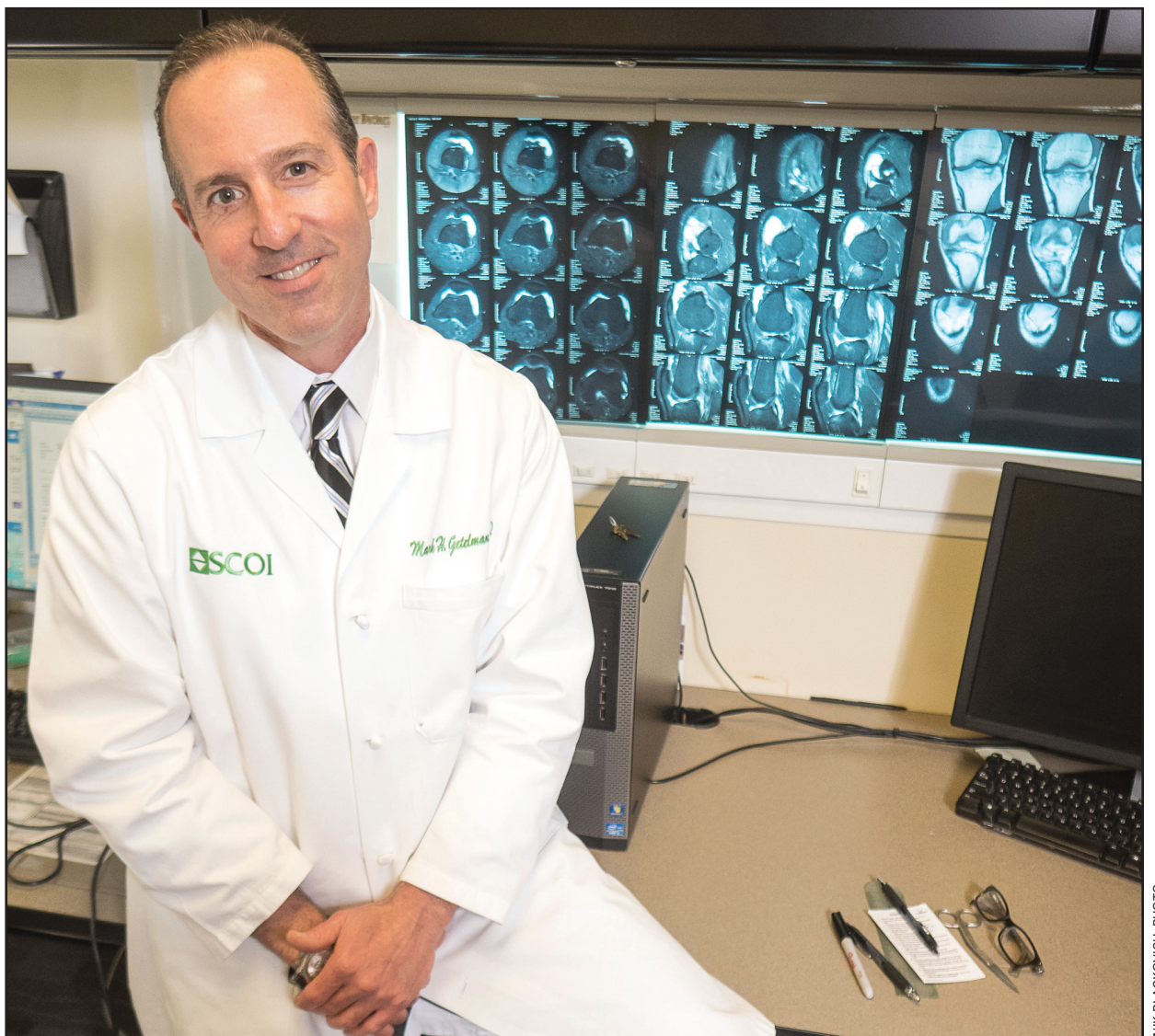
Getelman said a lot of his patients, however, aren't necessarily professional or even semi-professional athletes who lean on athletics as a career. Rather it's the amateur athlete that keeps him the busiest.

"We take care of a lot of college athletes, but we also get a lot of weekend warriors," Getelman said. "We cover 14 to 15 high schools and also treat patients who play basketball in their 40s, 50s and even 60s. That's what makes up a bulk of our practice. It's really all over the map."

Getelman goes on to explain, despite practicing in sports medicine, some of his procedures are for those not even participating in sports. He said sports medicine deals with both athletes and non-athletes alike. This procedure helps those who are disabled by their injuries and enable them to do the everyday things they want to do.

Growing up in Florida, Getelman can speak from experience. He, too, was an amateur high school athlete who spent his fair share of time in a doctor's office with sports-related injuries. A tennis and baseball player as a teenager, he said it was that experience that drove him toward a career in sports medicine.

After receiving degrees from Tulane University in New Orleans and the University of Florida, Getelman traveled north and completed his orthopedic surgery residency at Boston University, where he was the resident sports medicine director from 1995 to 1996. This experience led him to another sports medicine, arthroscopic and reconstructive surgery fellowship program at Southern California Orthopedic Institute — and Getelman hasn't left since.



Mark Getelman is a sports medicine surgeon specializing in shoulder and knee procedures.

A lot has changed in sports medicine since Getelman first started learning the practice in the early 90s. Any avid sports fan could tell you, a tear to your anterior cruciate ligament is a lot more common than it was 30 years ago something Getelman attributes to simple human evolution.

"The speed of games has increased," he said. "Athletes are just bigger, faster and stronger. The biggest spike (in knee injuries) is in female soccer and basketball players."

But surgeons and their technology are evolving, too. The recovery time for knee-ligament injuries is quicker now as well. Before, an ACL tear was rare, and was considered nearly a death-sentence for athletes. Now, top-tier athletes like the NFL's Minnesota Vikings' running back Adrian Peterson recover from ligament tears in less than a year and almost seem to get stronger after the injury.

Getelman attributes faster recoveries to the advance-

ments in surgical technologies, such as smaller cameras reaching smaller vantage points and 4K-resolution technology making its way into surgery rooms. Stem cell research is now on the brink of expanding and that has the ability to vastly enhance recovery.

Getelman is doing his own advancing. Now a leader in his field, he has published several articles and textbook chapters on shoulder, knee and ankle topics. He is also currently the co-director of the Southern California Orthopedic Institute Sports Medicine Fellowship Program, a program that Getelman is all too familiar with.

"I'm the co-director of the same fellowship I went to 20 years ago. I'm now running it, so everything has kind of come full circle," Getelman said. "I want to continue to educate future generations so they can be better than what we are today."